

## United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore 9922 Front St. (Hwy M-72) Empire, Michigan 49630-9797

July 31, 2006

D18 (GMP-WS) (SLBE)

## Dear Friends:

On behalf of the National Park Service and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study (GMP/WS) public planning workshops recently held at the Traverse City West High School on June 20 and 21.

Thanks to you, the workshops were a success! You provided us with a wide range of ideas and comments, and then sorted and presented them to those in attendance. This was a crucial step in developing a new General Management Plan/Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/WS/EIS) which reflects the diverse views of many stakeholders. From this information, we will develop the various alternative management concepts. If you were not able to attend the workshops, rest assured there will be additional opportunities to participate and comment during future steps in the planning process. A summary of the public comments and results from the workshops will be available soon on our website for you to review.

We were surprised to learn that a number of people believe that wilderness would close off areas to the public. That is just not true! In fact, wilderness is intended specifically for recreational use by people who want to enjoy a primitive, "get-away-from-it-all" experience. The Wilderness Act of 1964 states that wilderness "shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people" and "shall be devoted to the public for purposes of recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historic use."

The park has been managing the nearly 31,000 acres of the existing proposed wilderness <u>as</u> wilderness since 1981. The 1.2 million people who visit the park each year continue to enjoy a wide range of visitor experiences in both proposed wilderness areas as well as the other areas of the park. Many do not realize that they are recreating in areas managed as wilderness.

It has never been our intention to ban the public from areas proposed or designated as wilderness at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Our goal continues to be to achieve a balance of appropriate public access while preserving the nationally significant resources and their associated values entrusted to our care.

Thus far, we are on track to reach our ambitious target of completing a plan by the end of 2008, and we appreciate the cooperation and participation you have shown so far.

## **Next Steps:**

Later this fall, we will issue Newsletter #3, which will contain the alternative management concepts developed from the information we received thus far and again request you to comment.

After incorporating public comments, we will further define the concepts into Preliminary Alternatives in the spring of 2007. One of the primary outcomes of this major planning effort will be Preliminary Alternatives, which will include various possible configurations of proposed wilderness within Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. These Preliminary Alternatives will be outlined in Newsletter #4, followed by another series of public meetings in early May 2007. The meetings will be held near the National Lakeshore in Benzie and Leelanau Counties, and perhaps Grand Traverse County as well. We will provide the meeting details as early as possible so you can make the necessary arrangements to participate. At that point in the process, we will be particularly interested in hearing what the public likes and dislikes about each of the Preliminary Alternatives presented. From that information, we will develop the Preferred Alternative and Draft General Management Plan/Wilderness Study by the summer of 2008. Another series of public meetings and a hearing is tentatively planned for May or June 2008, followed by the Final GMP/WS/EIS by the end of that year.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the GMP/WS process so far and look forward to your continued participation throughout this important planning effort.

You can access the latest GMP/WS/EIS information and provide input at the park's website located at <a href="https://www.nps.gov/slbe">www.nps.gov/slbe</a> or for more information call (231) 326-5134.

Sincerely,

Dusty Shultz Superintendent

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